

March 16, 2009

Thomas P. Gaffey, Co-Chair
Andrew M. Fleishmann, Co-Chair
Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Regarding Raised Bill #6666, Section 7

An act requiring School Districts to utilized Board Certified Behavior Analysts when and individual education plan includes applied behavior analytic services as part of a students special education

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a special education teacher working with children with autism and a cousin of a young child with autism. I am in support of Raised Bill # 6666, Section 7. I support this bill because it is necessary to ensure that children with autism receive a free and appropriate education implemented by qualified personnel.

While the number of children with autism in Connecticut has skyrocketed, the number of behavior analysts working with this segment of the population has also increased exponentially. However, school districts and parents continue to hire individuals that do not have adequate training or an appropriate professional credential. In fact, many parents and school districts are still unaware of what kind of education and experience someone identifying themselves as a behavior analyst should have, and are basing their hiring decision solely on the claims made by the provider.

The Connecticut General Statute that defines special education states that the definition of "related service providers" is derived from IDEA as amended from time to time. In the most recent revision of IDEA, related service providers were defined as those professionals including "developmental, corrective, and other support services" including but not necessarily limited to those already monitored by the state, and other services "as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education". Behavior Analytic services are routinely outlined on students Individual Education Plans and would therefore meet these criteria. Additionally, IDEA states that related service personnel qualifications are either "consistent with any State-approved or State-recognized certification...or other comparable requirements that apply to the professional discipline in which those personnel are providing special education or related services". With this federal legislation already in place, and a national certification program already in existence, the State Department of Education should recognize the national certification program for behavior analysts, and mandate that school districts follow the existing protocols in place for related service providers, i.e., obtain and maintain a copy of each person's proof of certification, and submit an annual attestation to the state. Otherwise we will continue to be out of compliance with the federal IDEA mandate – and

federal law always trumps state law which places both the state and individual school districts at risk.

In fact, the state of Connecticut has already been requiring proof of certification of behavior analysts employed by the Connecticut Birth to Three system for several years, so there is already a state precedent for this position.

Peter Taffel
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Taffel", written over the printed name and address.